

★ **PRINCIPALS' CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR
EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

It is axiomatic that the role of the principal is vital in the attainment of the primary goals and objectives of the school hence this study examined the personal characteristics of principals and their effective management of secondary schools in Edo State. Sixty principals formed the sample of the study which represented ten percent (10%) of the 596 secondary school principals in Edo State. The study was based on survey research design. With the use of the t-test, it was found that age of principals influences their management effectiveness as older principals were more administratively effective than younger ones while sex had no significant influence on principals' management effectiveness. Based on the findings, it was recommended that age, which is closely connected to principals' teaching experience, should as usual always play prominent role in the appointment of principals and that principals should continue to be appointed without prejudice to gender.

Keywords: principals' characteristics, principals' effectiveness, age, gender, school management, secondary schools.

Introduction

There seems an emerging clear recognition that education is the greatest instrument for man's economic empowerment and his socio-political emancipation. The nation's faith in education in practice through the formal school system essentially has been unreserved, total and boundless. It is in furtherance of this faith that the federal government of Nigeria adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effective national development based on the five main national objectives as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). This is perhaps why education has been recognized as a veritable weapon to fight against poverty, diseases, ignorance, and oppression, among others.

Since education has attracted a tremendous recognition in the developmental equation of Nigeria, it implies that those who promote the realization of the aims and objectives of education known as principals' are playing important social roles. Principals who are one of the most crucial variables in the implementation of the nation's educational policy effectively manage the schools placed under their supervision. In the same vein, secondary school system serves as a "bridge" between the primary school and the tertiary institutions or a "transit institution" from the primary to tertiary institution. As a matter of fact, it is at this school level that career decisions are made for further endeavour.

Management is the art of getting things done through others efficiently and effectively. It is a process by which cooperative groups direct the actions of others towards common goals. It is an integral part of an organization. It stands to reason, therefore, that educational management implies the application of management principles, procedure and practices to the issues and problems of education. Its main purpose is to ensure that the resources made available to the educational system are well utilized in order to achieve the goals of education.

Aderomun and Aina (1999) describe educational manager as "anyone who directs the work of others, spends more than half of his time on managerial function and activities, and has a certain amount of authority over his subordinates, or recommend them and assign work to accomplish organizational objectives". Modern educational managers are geared towards getting results and achieving desired goals. In

Nigeria school managers or heads are commonly called "principals". They supervise the teachers who are usually professionals from fields different from their areas of specialization.

Since education goals relate to teaching, learning and growth of youths, effective school management is specifically concerned with students, teachers, and the rules, regularitioms and policies that govern the school system. It is increasingly becoming a specialized activity involving planning, organizing and directing the resources of people and things to the support and the enablement of the teaching-learning situations appropriate to the institutions goals and to the needs and purposes of students and society. Principals, as heads of their various institutions, are expected to perform the tasks of provision of instructional/academic leadership, responsibilities to staff, responsibilities to students, managing the schools financial and physical resources, managing the school community relations, and keeping of school records. These management tasks keep the operation of school system functional as they encourage management techniques including planning, organizing, stimulating, controlling, supervising and appraising the activities of school system which help to achieve its goals.

The achievement of these goals depends on the ability and willingness of secondary school principals to put all the necessary administrative tools in place so as to accomplish the stated school goals. Obviously, the most successful and competent or effective school principals are those who demonstrate knowledge and competence in the area of: public and corporate policies, human resources, financial management, method and systems management, effective decision making process, effective mode of communication, among others. In a study carried out by Okhakhu (2007), he found that there was no significant difference in the performance of management based on age. He went further to say that whether a principal is old or young, he should be able to administer a school properly, especially when such a principal has gained sufficient years of experience on the job as either a head of department or a vice principal.

Glasscock's (2009) study on chief executive officers in Texas public college revealed that age does not affect the principals' performance of his administrative responsibilities. In contrast, Orboh (2004) found in his study of the leadership of the Association for Inter-

collegiate Athletics for women that age affected administrative effectiveness. Okalo (2003) observed that age tends to affect the headmasters administrative performance. Older headmasters were seen to be more effective in school administration because they tended generally to spend more years on-the-job, attended seminars and participated in relevant professional discussions which exposed them to new techniques of administration. In the same study, Okalo (2003) found that there was a significance difference in performance between primary school headmasters with duration of experience 4-11 years, and 20 years and above.

On gender and principals management effectiveness, Okhakhu (2007) found that there existed significant difference in the performance of management between male and female principals as perceived by the teachers. In his study, male principals were rated higher than female principals. In a survey by Barter (2005), a group of teachers rated male and female principals as equal in ability and personal qualities.

It is significant to note that several characteristics have bearing on administrative effectiveness of principals. These include age, sex, experience, qualifications and school location, among others. But age and sex are considered for the purpose of this study. Also a scale of 1-4 was used for determining effectiveness rating of principals in terms of age and sex.

The Problem

Schools are established in order to educate and train individuals to perform useful services to themselves as well as to their societies. The end-product of the school system is education, and this is obtained in whole or in part through teaching and learning. The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the teaching-learning process depends mainly on the standard of performance of the principal. In other words, the achievement of the goals of the school depends largely upon the effectiveness of the principals of schools – and this varies from school to school.

With the increase in schools and subsequent increase in enrolment, staffing position, financial outlay, community participation in school activities, the principals management tasks have increased considerably both in scope and complexity. Principals now carry out the following functions, admission and placement of students, recruitment,

orientation, orientation and assignment of staff, preparation and administration of school budget, development of the curriculum improvement and supervision of instruction, reporting of students progress and evaluation of staff, among others. Since the management skills and abilities of the principals are linked with the success or failures of the achievement of goals of the schools, principals owe it a duty to perform such functions effectively to enable the schools to achieve their goals.

A critical observation of schools performance will reveal a degree of variability in respect of level of performance which shows that there is a difference in performance of management of schools by principals. The questions therefore arise whether it is factors such as gender and age of principals that influence principals' effectiveness in the management of schools.

Research Questions

1. Does age of principals influence their management effectiveness?
2. Does gender influence the management effectiveness of principal

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant different in the management of schools between young and old principals.

Ho₂: There is no significant different in the management of schools between male and female principals.

METHOD

This is a descriptive survey. The population of this study was made up of all the 596 principals and teachers of public secondary schools in Edo State. In order to ensure accurate and effective sampling, the researcher obtained a comprehensive data of all the public secondary schools in Edo State as at December, 2011 from the Post Primary Education Board, Benin City. The total number of principals and teachers were obtained in the eighteen local government area of Edo State. Using the simple random sampling technique, nine (9) out of the eighteen (18) local government areas were selected. The stratified random sampling technique was then used to select sixty (60) secondary

schools from the selected local government areas. This represents approximately 10% of the secondary schools principals in Edo State. This method was adopted in order to ensure fair representation of the variables of age and gender of principals. Four (4) teachers who have spent a minimum of five years in each school were systematically selected from each of the schools. It was envisaged that only such teachers were able to correctly rate their principals performance of management functions.

The instrument used for gathering data for this study was a questionnaire titled Teachers Rating of Principals Questionnaire (TERPRIQ). The questionnaire contained two parts. Part "A" consisted of the demographic variables of the principals while part "B" consisted of twenty-four (24) questions based on the six management functions of the principals; which were intended to elicit responses based on the 4-point Likert type scale of Highly Effective, (4 points), Effective (3 points), Ineffective (2 points) and Highly Ineffective (1 point). The principals filled the part A, while their teachers filled part B (assessing their principals' effectiveness).

Data Analysis

The t-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The results of this study are presented in tables 1 & 2 according to the hypotheses that guided the study.

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the management of schools between young and old principals.

Table 1: t-test analysis of the rating difference in management between young and old principals.

Principals	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	Remarks
Old	53	87.5	9.2	58	3.547	1.9%	Rejected
Young	7	83.5	9.6	58			H_0

Level of significance = 0.5

From Table 1, the calculated value of 3.547 is higher than the table value of 1.96. The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the management of schools between young and old principals is therefore rejected.

Ho: There is no significant difference in the management of schools between male and female principals.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the rating in the management between male and female principals. Level of significance = 0.5

Gender	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	Remarks
Male	45	86.5	9.2	58	0.058	1.96	Accepted
Female	15	88	9.6				Ho

Level of significance = 0.5

From Table 2, the calculated value of 0.058 is less than the table value of 1.96. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the management of schools between male and female principals is retained or accepted.

Discussion

Results of this study provide relevant information on the variables that influence principals effectiveness management of schools in Edo State. The result of the analysis showed that there was a significant difference in the management effectiveness between young and old principals in terms of age. Older principals were found to be more administratively effective than younger principals. This revealed that principals' management effectiveness has relationship with age. The findings agree with the study of Wood (2001) and Okalo (2003). Okalo (2003) had found that age tends to affect the headmaster's administrative performance because the older headmasters tended generally to spend more years on the job, attended seminars and participated in relevant professional discussions which expose them to new techniques of administration. However, these findings are incongruous with the findings of Okechukwu (2009) and Okhakhu (2007) that age does not affect principals' performance of his administrative responsibilities. The sample population which consisted of sixty principals two were below the age of 40 years. This is so because principals are usually appointed to the leadership of schools as a result of long service as classroom teachers. This practice is based on the belief that the teachers would have acquired enough administrative skills and competence to function as a leader. Since this is the practice, it is normal that most teachers may have grown above the cohort of 40 years before being appointed principals.

The study equally revealed a result of no significant difference in the management of schools between male and female principals. Older principals were more effective in school administration while male principals were not less effective than female principals. This study showed that there is no significant difference in the management effectiveness between male and female principals. This agrees with the findings of Barter (2005) in which a group of teachers rated male and female principals as equal in ability and personal qualities. This could be attributed to the fact that since the male and female principals were given the same educational training and operate under a similar condition, there may be no significant difference in their management effectiveness. This finding justifies the Post Primary Education Board that does not use gender disparity in the appointment of principals.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that age of the principal tends to have influence on the effective management of schools while the gender of the principals has no influence on the effective performance in management of schools by principals. It is therefore, recommended that the Post Primary Education Board should continue to use age as one of the parameters of appointing principals of schools. Also, gender should not be a determining factor for the appointment of principals. Principals should on appointment continually be exposed to educational management seminars and workshops in order to keep those who are not trained educational administrators equipped with the techniques of administration. Inspectorate Division of the Ministry of Education should be overhauled in order to make it more functional. Vehicles should be provided by government so as to make it fairly convenient for the inspectors to pay regular and organized visits to schools; most especially schools and the rural areas. This will help in enhancing standard and creating a good communication network between the schools and the Ministry of Education.

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